

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4170

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 441

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UK, NZ

SUBJ: NEW UK HIGH COMMISSIONER TO NEW ZEALAND

REF: 72 LONDON A-001

1.

ROLM SMEDLEY, WHO IS SCHEDULED TO
ARRIVE IN WELLINGTON THIS MONTH AS THE NEW
BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER, HAS BEEN HIGHLY
REGARDED BY THIS EMBASSY DURING HIS JAN 1973-
DEC 1975 TOUR AS HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SRI
LANKA AND THE MALDIVES.

2. ON FIRST ACQUAINTANCE SMEDLEY MIGHT GIVE
THE IMPRESSION OF STIFFNESS AND ALOOFNESS.
IN FACT, HE HAS PROVEN AN EASY AND CONGENIAL
COLLEAGUE, WITH A WRY SENSE OF HUMOR, WHO HAS
BEEN HELPFUL AND FORTHCOMING IN EXCHANGING
ASSESSMENTS WITH US. A HIGHLY INTELLIGENT
MAN WITH A BALANCED ANALYTICAL MIND, SMEDLEY'S
ASSESSMENTS HAVE PROVED SOUND AND
HIS JUDGMENTS GOOD.

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3. SMEDLEY HANDLED TWO DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

DURING HIS TOUR HERE AND BY ALL ACCOUNTS HE HANDLED THEM WELL. ONCE PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE HAD REACHED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH HAROLD WILSON TO TAKE OVER BRITISH-OWNED TEA AND RUBBER ESTATES IN RETURN FOR ADEQUATE COMPENSATION, SMEDLEY WORKED ACTIVELY AND SKILLFULLY BEHIND THE SCENES TO INSURE THAT TAKEOVER ITSELF, WITH ITS ATTENDANT DISPUTES AND DISLOCATIONS, WOULD NOT ERODE THE BASICALLY GOOD UK-SRI LANKA RELATIONSHIP. HE ALSO HAD THE TASK OF NEGOTIATING WITH THE GOVT OF THE MALDIVES FOR THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM THE GAN AIR BASE, WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO BE COMPLETED BY APRIL OF THIS YEAR.

4. SMEDLEY'S ASSIGNMENT TO WELLINGTON TAKES HIM BACK TO THE FIRST POST IN HIS FOREIGN SERVICE CAREER AND TO A COUNTRY WHICH IS HIS WIFE'S BIRTHPLACE. BOTH SMEDLEYS ARE SOCIALLY ACTIVE MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, STRONG SUPPORTERS OF ANGLICAN CHURCH, AND AVID GARDENERS. THEY SHOULD BE NATURALS FOR WELLINGTON. WITH FOUR AMBASSADORSHIPS/ HIGH COMMISSIONER-SHIPS BEHIND HIM, SMEDLEY PLANS TO RETIRE AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS NEW ZEALAND ASSIGNMENT.

5. FOLLOWING IS ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL ON SMEDLEY, CONTAINED REFAIR, WHICH IS DRAWN FROM OFFICIAL REGISTER OF BRITISH FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS:

QTE BORN JUNE 19, 1920. HM FORCES 1939-45; DOMINIONS OFFICE 1946-47; COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS OFFICE 1947-48; PRIVATE SECRETARY TO PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE 1947-48; SECOND, LATER FIRST, SECRETARY WELLINGTON 1948-51; SALISBURY 1951-53; PRINCIPAL PRIVATE SECRETARY TO COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY 1954-57; COUNSELOR CALCUTTA 1957; DELHI 1958-60; HEAD OF CONFIDENTIAL

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INFORMATION POLICY DEPT CRO 1960-62; NEWS DEPT CRO 1962-63; HIGH COMMISSIONER ACCRA 1964-65 AND 1966-67; HM AMB VIENTIANE 1968-70. ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE, FCO, WITH SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA SINCE MAY 1970. CMG (1965), MBE (MIL.). MARRIED IN 1950 TO BERYL HARLEY BRON. TWO SONS, 1952 AND 1959; TWO DAUGHTERS,

1954 AND 1960. UNQTE.

VAN HOLLEN

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